

JUST FAMOUS ENOUGH NOT TO BE NOTICED

As told by
Michael Donovan

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5.

1985 - 1988 The Arts Scene | NSW Bicentenary | In God's Name

Succeed in spite of management.

The period at Nimrod and the subsequent West encounter provided me with many great connections within many cultural sectors. Cast adrift again I worked the network for opportunity. Strangely the first referral came through the NSW Department of the Arts. Christine Hartgill told me Sydney Dance Company needed a stand-in General Manager for a short time while they considered a new permanent appointment which turned out to be the very capable Lynn Ralph. Chairman Graham Galt wanted stability during the search phase. Graeme wanted me to apply but I just didn't see myself as fitting in with the company even though I did admire it greatly and got on well with Graeme Murphy.

However, I did fill in a few days a week and late in 1985 worked with Graeme, Janet Vernon, Iva Davies and the boys of *Ice House* to present the premier of Murphy's *Boxes* at the Sydney Opera House. Apart from being notable in itself as a great piece, a behind the scenes drama went off unknown to most. The union at the SOH pulled the plug on the opening night about an hour before curtain over an award dispute.

Not only a pending disaster for the premiere night with a very select audience and for a terrific artistic partnership but also we had negotiated a link from the SOH to New York for a broadcast recording of the work on The Arts and Entertainment Channel. *Boxes* was being held to ransom.

The house Union representative had physically pulled the power plug for all on-stage electronics and lighting. With barely 10 minutes to go I called upon my connections within the union (including the affiliated unions such as Actors Equity) and we managed to get past the strangle-hold. The show went on to huge critical acclaim.

Disappointingly, I was not so successful during the bicentenary for another world-class performance a few years later.

The contracts for *Boxes* were prepared by a very talented performing rights lawyer Michael Frankel with whom I first had dealings with through Actor's Equity and Nimrod. The documents had provision for further exploitation in various media.

Graham McGregor's Film Funding and Management offered assistance with backup financing if a film was of interest. Indeed, there was interest from Graeme Murphy and Iva Davies and the band to make *Boxes* into a film. Rod Muir of Film Australia, Andy Lloyd-James of the ABC, CH13 in the US supported by Esso and an Australian association between Challenge Corporation and Partnership Pacific, 2MMM and a race between Ch10 and Ch9 were all variously involved. In the end, like many such projects, it wasn't able to be put together even with global distribution interest from Phil Gerlack of *Towards 2000* fame and an offer from HBO courtesy of Ed Barnum.

I think Ric Birch, Director of Entertainment at World Expo 88 in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, during the Australian Bicentenary year 1988 used extracts from *Boxes*. I know he opened discussions with me around the idea for it to feature as potentially part of the opening ceremony. I passed him over to Lynn and Graeme.

The Little Advertising Agency, so named after adman John Little, held a shareholding in Stage by Stage Productions (SxS). John and Doug were the principals in this ad agency in North Sydney. John and his business partner Doug Christie wanted to sell their half-share in SxS. We had worked together through Nimrod and Melaleuka. John has since retired due to his MS. Doug is still involved in theatrical advertising along with a diversified portfolio of other clients. The other shareholding in SxS was held by respected theatrical executive producer Walter van Nieuwkuyk. I had engaged Walter on budgets for *The Heretic* as his reputation preceded him. He was looking for a new business partner to expand Stage by Stage options.

Walter is affectionately known in theatrical circles as *The Baron*. It suits his character, deportment and style. Walter comes from Dutch ancestry. If one knows history, one could be forgiven for thinking his honorarium is a hereditary title going back to the 1568 Spanish invasion of Holland but it is not. Here's the real story.

In 1986, Walter (wearing a monocle over the left eye) escorted Carol to two royal functions in Sydney Town Hall while I was overseas. Walter wore a sash and ceremonial medal and was introduced as *Baron*. The Duke of Edinburgh seemed to recognise Walter's aristocratic accoutrements.

In truth Walter's title was awarded to him by Patrick Cargill of *Father, Dear Father* fame during the 1975 Australian tour of *Two and Two Make Sex* for JC Williamson Theatres (the Firm). It stuck and the industry happily embraced use of the title which Walter has proudly answered to ever since. The monocle was a birthday present from theatre producer John Frost. The sash and medal came from the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust wardrobe and props department.

Carol was greatly impressed by His Royal Highness's memory as he recalled meeting her from reception to reception.

I had acquired the rights to Larry Shue's *The Foreigner* from West's Melaleuka. The rights came accompanied by investment interest from Rothschild's Hank Tuten along with others he kindly introduced. The plan was to produce the comedy under the Stage by Stage banner. Walter wanted to use Stage by Stage Productions to also bid for possible theatrical opportunities during the upcoming New South Wales Bicentenary Celebrations. He also wanted to freelance our services to independent producers to provide excellence in theatrical administration, production values and stage management.

We eventually got *Foreigner* up, directed by Terry Clark in partnership with the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust (AETT) and did not need the interest from the range of small investors which was on offer. Lots of small investments are notoriously fraught with management difficulties. The AETT decision to take all risk in the play was probably influenced by the play's 686 performance run and Outer Critics Circle Award plus Best New Off-Broadway Production Award. Kathleen Norris took on all the production risk with Stage by Stage as co-producer on a share of box-office. Why she wanted all risk (read all control) amused us as the deal kept our risk low and our opportunity tied to box office success.

Tragically, Larry Shue was killed in a plane crash on 23 September 1985 before the Australian Premier of his play.

Walter and one of the Trust's GMs, Jeff Kovel, planned a national tour starting in Newcastle. The play took off. It did very well in interstate capitals and regional centres until many months later, after several cities, it reached Sydney where the Trust booked the Footbridge Theatre for what turned out to be a disastrous run. Overall, the play broke even.

I lost a lot of respect for Kovel over royalty changes, payment variations and contract defaults he demanded. Kathleen mistakenly blew up at Walter and me and SxS over these matters. The William Morris Agency in New York threatened action against

AETT but not SxS. I put Kathleen straight with evidence that the stuff-up was the AETT's fault. From then on any dealings with the AETT were always in writing. Kathleen dropped the 'let me impress you' image thing with Walter and me, and I believe we got on better from then on. The dealings also changed Walter's working relationship with Jeff over the following years.

During regular production update meetings Kathleen would sit on the corner of her desk with long legs crossed and run the meetings in a fashion after a simpering Marlene Dietrich. You always had to wait for a meeting with Kathleen and, when ready she would burst through her office door and undertake an extravagantly staged introduction among staff and visitors whom she knew well. It was so fake and pretentious.

Kathleen wanted to bring the half-price ticket concept to the arts in Australia. Well known in New York, the theatre sells any available seat for half-price at the last minute. Don Grace and Andrew McKinnon did the numbers and the financial modelling. I worked with Kathleen on the deals with venues and I also planned and executed the creation of the *HALFTIX* booth at the Eastern end of Martin Place, Sydney.

The negotiations with Sydney City Council, objections from the normal ticketing organisations and difficulties making the small space work were all overcome. While *HALFTIX* opened on Monday, 21 July 1986, actually getting theatres to release inventory to stock the concept proved a further challenge. The Trust and *HALFTIX* struggled on.

By the time Kathleen Norris departed from the AETT the organisation was a shadow of its former self. She and Patrick Veitch, her Australian Opera former General Manager husband, returned to the USA. I got on well with Patrick in our few dealings even though both he and Kathleen were well known for each having their own unique version of abrasive styles. I knew of Patrick's depression but was saddened when I learned he had taken his own life in 2003. Before Kathleen left the AETT I was able to get most of our bicentenary contracts wrapped up for

theatre and dance touring content. Yes, SxS did gain bicentennial events. Read on.

SxS gained good reputation from the Trust association, principally due to Walter's superlative production skills. Offers started to arrive.

One was when we were brought in to advise on the early concept stage-musical version of *Rasputin: the Musical Revolution* written by David Tydd. The production was eventually, I believe, produced by Tydd, Pat Shaw and Harry Vogelsanger at Sydney's State Theatre. Despite a significant real investment in production management (Steven Hopkins, Mike Wade and Ronnie Arnold as examples), casting (Jackie Love, Jon English, Angela Ayres, Pamela Stephenson, Terry Serio and Angry Anderson as examples) recording rights and foreign options plus so much backfilling of shortcomings of the creator, in due course we were pleased not to be involved any further than the initial advisory role.

There were awful dealings with Tydd after the press launch announcing the show. David seemed to evolve into his stage character's own theatre auteur. Dealing with his mother Mavis was an experience. Mavis wanted SxS (principally me) to take over as Executive Producer as "David and the minor investors (Sherman and Barnum) trust you." In fact, I didn't like what I saw. David was becoming so difficult there was no attraction to assist. The minor investors were more than capable of defending their own patch.

My gut feeling was right. Harry Vogelsanger sought legal advice and tried to take possession of the rights. I think he was successful eventually because he came back to SxS in late 1988 asking us to support his efforts to take the musical to the UK and Russia through contacts and agents. We declined.

The crew and actors threatened to strike (five did resign ultimately). Equity called me to get a rational picture. Chris Rix was mooted to assume the exec-prod role if I didn't. The capable Sandra Mackenzie took it over. Walter wanted out – sensible man. Harry wanted me to deliver an ultimatum to David and Pat to step aside with threats from the ad agency and PR company to go if

they didn't. Little Advertising eventually walked away being owed some \$150,000.

Now, SxS were only advisors to the producers and not formally part of the production crew in a normal sense. Walter and I sat down and looked at our options. The show had the hallmarks of a less than good outcome. SxS asked for and got a payout for services rendered. What a sigh of relief.

In similar historic vein, we spent some time working with Peter Townley on his planned production of *Quasimodo, the Musical* (originally titled *The Hunchback of Notre Dame, the Musical*). The script consultant was author, commentator and writer Bob Ellis. He had never read Victor Hugo's *Notre Dame de Paris*. I had a copy from my father. The book was a miniature print on tissue like paper with a hard cover designed for distribution among WWII troops. This minor collectable was destroyed when fire claimed Ellis' home during our work on the musical.

It may be of interest that the main challenge with the production was how to portray our interpretation of Quasimodo in his two personas – the hunch-back and his imagined handsome self when with Esmeralda. We liked the idea of an alter-ego for Quasimodo using a shadow puppet projection and lighting. My choice was Kim Carpenter to solve the technical problems. Unfortunately, we never got the chance to experiment. I took the idea for this technique from cartoon stories where an alter-ego shadow is used very successfully.

Some extraordinary set designs and a poster concept were prepared by talented designer Warren Field - a huge talent lost to AIDS. Walter, Carol and I visited Warren in his last weeks in St Vincent's Hospice. Even while in hospital he was designing and meeting with his students from the Australian Film and TV School. In the absence of a musical director, I fiddled with the range of musical themes available to incorporate in the score – carnival chorus, gypsy melodies for Esmeralda's theme, traditional French songs of the era, military and religious tunes, drinking or tavern

songs and a main theme to be given to the bell of the cathedral from which Quasimodo's own theme would be derived.

The timeframe covered by this record about Quasimodo runs from early 1988 into 1992 when Literary Agent, Rose Creswell and consultant and aspiring producer Richard McLauchlan tried to revive interest in staging this musical.

My notes reveal broad ranging discussions between SxS and the AETT across a variety of other theatrical projects using the creative talents of Louis Nowra, Robert Gavin, Nick Enright, Terry Clarke and Alex Harding; together with actors Drew Forsythe, Barry Creighton, Bert Newton, June Salter, Grant Dodwell, Nick Tate and John Gaden.

Walter already had terrific relations with the *Gordon Frost Organisation* which still exist between John Frost and Walter even today. SxS had promising prospects. I was consulting to the *Song Company* on potential restructure options with Charles Coleman and with Peter Seymour at the *Sydney Philharmonia*. We also connected with Joseph Papp to see if a tour of Australia by the New York Shakespeare Festival might be possible. Unfortunately, it wasn't economically viable.

Rothschilds invited SxS to submit a plan to create a Legitimate Theatre Investment Pool to be syndicated and managed by this bank on an international level. I did an extensive outline but it never got past their risk analysis people who didn't understand the arts. If this idea had flown, the first event was to have been a tour of Australia by The Muppet Exhibition from Henson Marketing UK proposed by Mark Greenside, Fred Gaffney and Pamela Brand targeting August 1986. Without the 'pool' we still tried to fund the tour through a syndication across the AETT, BT Australia, Macquarie Bank, Partnership Pacific, a couple of high-net worth individuals and sponsorship from Uncle Pete Toys who had the franchise rights to merchandise. My face was everywhere in the right circles even though ultimately unsuccessful in making alternatives work to underwrite the costs.

In January 1986 I was contacted to fast track a study visa application for a young man who had applied for and been accepted for a National Institute of Dramatic Arts place in a three-year course. His temporary work visa was about to expire and he had no authorisation to re-enter Australia to continue studies. Why someone thought of me to resolve such matters isn't known but I did know Senator Kerry Sibraa. The senator connected me with the right people and Ricki (not his real name) obtained the right papers through the right channels and went on to work for Kennedy-Miller in a leading American role for a film done in Thailand.

With our reputation growing, SxS was approached by the likes of Greg Hocking, Garry Penny, Wilton Morley, Hayes Gordon, James Thane and Cameron McIntosh for co-production and touring services. Walter knew them all better than I and it gave him some satisfaction to have them calling on us rather than the reverse. Thirty years later they still call on Walter as he is just the best in Australia at what he does.

Walter and I were waiting release of the planned bicentennial entertainment programme in order to bid for work. We had already met with Philip Rolfe, Deputy Director Arts Unit of the Australian Bicentennial Authority and had provided services to review the national arts and entertainment programme and to make recommendations to Derek Webster on an Outback Children's Show. Also, representing the Sydney Dance Company, I had on-going negotiations with Philip, Peter Faiman and Peter Sarah to plan a national dance tour in 1988 made up of four companies being the Western Australia Ballet, Australian Ballet, Sydney Dance Company and one other as then not chosen between the Australian Dance Theatre and Queensland Ballet. Graeme was enthusiastic to participate.

Walter noticed an advertisement for an Executive Producer for the NSW State Arts and Entertainment Programme centred on Sydney but with state wide community involvement. We applied as a company to provide the services and heard nothing until a call one day in late February 1986 asking us to consider a Letter of

Offer. Stage by Stage Productions was appointed to the executive producer role for the entire arts and entertainment programme of the 1988 New South Wales Bicentenary.

The small cultural unit we became part of and directed within the Bicentennial Council office came with some staff – Karen McBrien, Michael Haeburn-Little and Peter Hiland. Michael and Peter had event management backgrounds and Karen brought in community, arts and even sport. We got loads of assistance and support from the wonderful Patricia Parker. Funny, knowledgeable, sharing and politically savvy. For Stage by Stage I was the lead connection with Walter operating from our own offices some little distance away in the harbourside suburb of Woolloomooloo. We all worked well together, had fun and produced results quickly.

Because much has been written officially and unofficially about the organisation of all aspects of the State bicentenary I will contain myself to insights unlikely to be known or recorded elsewhere.

Our little team, supported by other staff planning various complementary activities across New South Wales, developed a \$6 million arts and entertainment programme of community, outdoor mass audience, spectaculars and touring activities plus some legacy projects using external agencies and professional associations to preserve aspects of NSW history.

An advantage Stage by Stage had in being a contractor was we could work quickly outside of government to engage interest from artists, organisations and providers. Naturally all procurement had to conform to established standards but we could cast a wide net and leverage our reputation to do deals. We were trusted while government bureaucracy wasn't. We could also offer a second-tier production option for worthwhile performance initiatives which might not meet the formal program criteria.

An example of this was to assist Anthony Steel with his Pacific Arts Festival 1988 interstate in Townsville from which extracts featured in World Expo'88. We introduced, advised and assisted wherever possible to facilitate engagement in the year long festivities.

Arts on the Move was a massive concept to bring the widest range of arts elements to regional New South Wales as we could possibly budget. We set up advisory groups across each participating cluster, such as: subsidised theatre and music with Justin MacDonnell and Keith Percival; dance with the aforementioned combination of contemporary and classic organisations; literature with David Williamson, Alex Buzo, Clem Gorman; professional theatre with Freddie Gibson, David Williamson, Hayes Gordon, Robert Love and June Salter; music with Malcolm Williamson, Philip Henry and Bill Reid; film with David Williams (Greater Union), Pat Lovell, Greg Coote and Matt Carroll; fine arts with Donald Friend and Ray Crook; photography with Branco Garcia and Robert Cotton. Craft and visual arts were also included but my notes don't show who was advising. Jon Hawkes of *Flying Fruit Fly Circus* represented children in arts in the community. Sue Beale, Jon's partner and Equity executive, also brought in *Circus Oz* and Jane Grant contributed Ashton's *Circus* in 1987. Jan Meek and Edmund Capon handled the planning for a Regional Galleries Tour along with the Regional Galleries Association.

Surprisingly, we had to fight hard to convince David Thompson and Chris Mangin of the *Australia Council for the Arts* to view the program as additional to annual programming and therefore entitled to funding consideration by special grant submission and not business as usual. If the activity wasn't national then the Australia Council didn't want to recognise and support it.

Negotiations to adjust this attitude went as high as the Australia Council chair, Professor Di Yerbury and were successful. Years later when Di was Vice-Chancellor of Macquarie University we had a dinner in honour of Ken Tribe which lasted into the wee hours at MG Garage restaurant. She and I with, I think, Justin Macdonnell (now teetotal) sat on a line of excellent red wines which the waiter said he would remain to serve provided we kept ordering. Thank goodness her chauffeur also remained as at that hour of the new morning taxis were scarce in the area.

The Arts and Entertainment Sub-committee for the NSW Bicentennial Council was chaired by Dr Michael Joel. Members were Alan Hoy, Stephen Hall, Derrick Webster, Evan Williams, Peter Fogelman and myself. Walter and I agreed to have me front for the contract deliverables. I was able to tap into my sphere of contacts whose influence to get things connected and done was substantial. I had burned very few bridges and had excellent credibility where it counted so I was able to reach back a long way to solicit favours, involvement and endorsements plus sponsorship.

There are numerous little stories I can tell about working with certain people but one will perhaps illustrate for the many. I stepped off a plane from an extended overseas talent scouting trip which is covered in more detail a few pages on. I was unexpectedly met at the airport by a chauffeur who whisked me to Channel Nine for a meeting with the famously aggressive Sam Chisholm. The meeting had been put together by Gerry Gleeson who wanted Nine's participation to cover regional broadcasting of events to engage the community. A great idea.

I was very tired and asked Chisholm what was the date of an event on Nine's calendar. I simply didn't know and had little reason to know until the meeting. In his much reported style Chisholm tore into me as if I was a staffer who should have known. I was stunned. He had used several strong expletives and so I replied in kind with a terse "Fuck you too. When you can have a civil conversation, call me," and walked out. I made it past reception to the car before his PA asked me to return. No apology and the conversation picked up where it had stalled. Apparently, I had gained some respect for standing up to Sam.

I am proud of one particular supporting commission we issued which was for an Australian musical. *Summer Rain* was collaboration between Nick Enright and Terry Clarke for which I also included film rights for the boys. Richard Wherrett wanted to direct for the Sydney Theatre Company as did Aubrey Mellor. I think Aubrey did finally direct the earliest version. Elizabeth

Butcher of the National Institute of Dramatic Arts was very supportive of the production getting a run. A tour option with funding from the Melbourne Theatre Co. was on offer with just under a half-share held by the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust. Also a number of commissions were put together with organisations such as *The Australian Theatre for Young People* and the *Sydney Conservatorium* for a Youth Opera concept from John Hopkins. Some worked others didn't. We just could not get composer Peter Sculthorpe to finish his work in time. Was it ever completed?

The team had the pleasure of working with John Trevillian of the Australia Day Council. John went on to become Assistant Director General, Office of Protocol & Special Events at NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet.

I realise my telling of this period of time is slanted to the Bicentenary. SxS also had a full production agenda handling budgets and planning for a number of prospective productions. The company was doing well and we bought out Little and Christie's shares. A raft of proposed productions went through our filtering. Stage plays, musicals and dance had their budgets, production values and marketing checked by Walter and me. We had developed software covering budgets and production management. Our packages were even of interest for inclusion in the plans to set-up *Business Arts Connection* by Antony Jeffrey a consortium of businesses using a brokerage service for improved sponsorship investment returns and support for the arts.

Peter Neustadt at CEL expressed interest in recording the key elements of the Arts and Entertainment program for video release. CEL wanted to build an arts library from the dozens of activities planned during 1988. CELs divisional head Trevor Bennun was quite enthusiastic about the creation of the library.

When David Hill became ABC Managing Director in 1987, he, Chris Reuter and Michael Stead talked about funding and producing thirty hours of TV from the Arts and Entertainment Program at fifty thousand dollars an hour for production. They talked but did little else.

My notes show we, SxS, even talked to CEL about forming CELStage as a joint venture to produce theatrical works and film them. The industry liked the idea, especially dance video. Sydney Dance Company offered *Some Rooms*, *Nearly Beloved* and *After Venice* as first product options. Once Ron Brierley bought into CEL and Malcolm Turnbull joined the board as their numbers man, accountant David Frankel killed the idea off despite support from Peter Neustadt and Stuart Reuben.

The Bicentennial Arts and Entertainment Sub-committee felt these initiatives were commercial ventures and not in need of or entitled to subsidy. I explained how deals like this often required some priming capital and that royalties were the mechanism for recovery of subsidy. However, there was no provision in the Council charter for income. This was to cause a problem, of my doing, in 1989.

It is not uncommon in entertainment to spend time developing activities which simply don't work out. It's a numbers game of sorts. Try ten concepts, win one or two. Waste the rest. One such was an approach by CH9 to create the first International Comedy Festival for Prime Time TV planned for broadcast in March 1987. The line up from comedy producer John Pinder included Barry Humphries, Paul Hogan, Bette Midler, Robin Williams, Los Trios Ringbarcus, Richard Stubbs and Wendy Harmer. John Dorrance, the US Consul for New South Wales heard about the plan and offered the potential to add Lily Tomlin who had just won a Tony Award. He even had us look into the *Last Farewell Tour* of Sir Yehudi Menuhin covering seven Australian venues plus consideration of Woza Albert fresh from the Lincoln Centre. It was a frenetic time.

Our thinking wasn't just arty stuff. Karen made sure we also looked at entertainment associated with sport. Bringing world-famous marching bands to Australia such as the famous *Trojans*, the less famous but terrific *Watsonville Band* and the *All Japan High School Marching Band* were suggested and delivered.

We assembled the largest massed choir in history (at the time); organised, and delivered what became regarded as a program

that challenged similar activities at the national level. I am very proud of the work we all delivered and the friendships we made have lasted years.

Walter and I used our international and national networks to ask for outstanding ideas for consideration. The cultural agencies for Germany, Poland, Italy and England all engaged to participate at various levels. The Biennale of Sydney put forward a program to us for support. I was also engaging with many of the local government councils in New South Wales on localised initiatives. Tangentially these geographic points-of-touch would turn out to be useful a decade later in my work with the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

In March 1986, I did a world-trip to seek out international Bicentenary options and, with Council knowledge, explored overlapping connections for SxS. I held meetings with some 35 agents, arts organisations and government agencies. One in particular, was to follow-up an introduction to Sir Cliff Richard by Diana Denley, a friend of Walter's. We had been sent a rehearsal video of *TIME* about to play the Dominion Theatre in London's West End. I was provided with seats to this extraordinarily technical show with a massive set. Richard played Wilder, the lead and with Sir Laurence Olivier as a deity figure. While an amazing show, it was too big for any theatre in Australia and in any case no large theatre was now available until 1990 or beyond given bicentenary bookings and other shows.

Our connections were a goldmine. Here are just a few of the outcomes developed for 1988:

Gothenburg based conductor Jen Jensen and his Norwegian National Opera administrator friend Bjorn Simensen wished to gather choristers from around the globe for the biggest performances of the Verdi *Requiem* and Handel's *Messiah*. Their organisational entity to present these events globally, still operates as World Festival Choir. We got a commitment from The Sir Malcolm Sargent Trust's Sylvia Darley to subsidise the UK choristers. The Trust's Australian people were prominent lawyer Kim Santow and administrator Jan Rockey.

I flew around the globe signing up choirs. Performances involved an assembly of 2,300 choristers from large choirs in Australia, USA (the biggest being the Texas Boys Choir courtesy of its director Jack Noble White) , Canada, Sweden, England and Wales, Italy, Japan, New Zealand and over a dozen smaller groups from around the globe. All were joined by many choristers from Australia, co-ordinated by *Sydney Philharmonia*.

The biggest challenge was accommodation for these performers. While we eventually billeted large numbers who needed it, the challenge allowed me to suggest to the likes of *Sitmar's* Ted Blamey we use cruise ships to provide an excellent level of accommodation and unique experience.

A little travel story. Carrying potentially millions in seat sales for Qantas and British Airways, I got 'bumped' off a BA flight to San Francisco. If I voluntarily downgraded from over-sold business class to the very last seat by the lavatory in economy I would pass-up compensation. As the SanFran meetings were time-critical I opted for the very last seat. After takeoff I observed some passengers being taken from economy to business. When my call button was answered I asked for the Head Steward and explained the situation and asked what was going on? Apparently, they were first class passengers moving to business and I was next but nothing was available. He asked what I needed to make the long flight bearable. I asked for a glass of good bubbly and a better meal. He did better than that. All masked in brown-paper bags I got a Business Class meal and a bottle of champagne, then another bottle. He also endorsed my ticket for a partial refund. I fell asleep until landing and not surprisingly, given the quantity of champagne, awoke bursting for a pee.

Two orchestras were needed for this massive choral spectacular. The normal configuration of the Sydney Entertainment Centre was reversed by Walter to place the musicians and singers in the seating curve. He also disguised the speakers hanging from the roof as enormous floral decorations. The blooms looked fabulous. Sound engineer Ron Barlow and Walter produced a magnificently balanced and pure sound. The lighting was another triumph for

Walter and the team. Rehearsals were undertaken by Jensen but the performance conductor was noted English Handel Opera maestro, Charles Farncombe. Charles had a long association with the Malcolm Sargent Festival Choir whose fundraising efforts contributed to child oncology research and support. We found him to be arrogant and disrespectful of Australian capabilities during rehearsals but in the end he congratulated the production team. By contrast was Evelino Pido, the conductor for the Verdi *Requiem*, who was a delight and who delivered a brilliant sparkling performance.

On the night the heavens opened to a torrent. Still every performer arrived and nearly every ticket holder. There was only one performance of each work so if you missed it then you had no second chance to be at or in a world-first experience. Other events in Europe and particularly Japan have eclipsed Sydney but at the time we delivered the biggest and some say one of the best.

What is it with Opening Nights and Unions and conductors wanting to screw the house? In the lead up to opening night Farncombe and the Union stopped any recording going ahead for *The Messiah*. Pido was fine with recording the *Requiem* but not the union. So, officially, no performance recording of this special two-night spectacular exists. Unofficially, I can now reveal a rehearsal tape was made. However, its whereabouts is now unknown. Perhaps someday it might pop-up and be of good enough quality to make a release possible if all parties were to agree. It is history and a proud moment for so many.

I nearly went blind with flash photography with musicians and choristers wanting a personal memory after each performance. The team felt justifiably very proud. Arnold and Mansell played games by applying pressure on the Sydney Philharmonia Society, as the local hosts, not to seat any of the arts unit team near the official party. All very childish and this was completely ignored through the sensible approach by the Society President Francois Kunc and founder / director Peter Seymour. In any case, Walter

and I were working both nights to deliver the event so the insult was to staff team members and partners. I loathe such pettiness.

Marching bands are big in the US. One such and famous is the *Trojans*. While in LA on chorister search, I connected with a band leader Bill Lutt who had written to us. He wanted to bring this famous marching band to NSW, tour the rural areas and larger centres and perform in Sydney – at their cost. Fortunately, it was a case of being there and opportunity knocking. I think they also generously gave some master-classes while in Sydney. I do know many friendships were made and sustained between Australian schools and this group. I speak more of the *Trojans* later.

A few what might have been ...

I have mentioned the head of the Premiers Department, Gerry Gleeson elsewhere. During this time he was Chairman of the New South Wales Bicentennial Council, the oversight body to whom the program director, Peter Arnold, reported after replacing Derrick Webster who remained in a supporting role. Every one of our program elements was reviewed by Peter and others, few of whom had any qualifications to assess the artistic or entertainment merit of proposals. The purpose was to control what went up through political filters so only 'sound' stuff went to the Council. Very, Yes, Minister.

We had received a worthwhile submission from the New South Wales Photographic Society. The Society wished to gain access to all of the archived historical image material from State Transit and State Rail. The archive contains some one quarter million glass slides which showed the opening up of the whole State of New South Wales by rail and Sydney by bus. It was a valuable historic visual record. This type of legacy project was one which I and the team were very keen to fulfil.

The submission was prepared and sent up to Peter for his endorsement. We barely had enough funds but scraped sufficient together and sold the project hard. With his approval the submission went through to Council. I attended the Council meeting to speak for the project. When it came my turn I launched into

a benefits analysis of saving these archives and was told to stop. The chairman, Gleeson, asked "Where is the paperwork?"

Now, selective submissions were colour-coded and I knew our colour and could see the submission sitting on the table in front of Gleeson partially masked by other papers. I referred him to the colour code only to have him repeat the question. I was being thick. What he was really telling me was "There is no paperwork so we will not discuss it or make a decision."

I pressed my case by going to his side and pulling the submission out and placing it in front of him. The penny started to drop when I looked at Peter Arnold's face which was scarlet and eyes about to pop. One of Gleeson's other minions, David O'Connor also gasped for air. Gleeson exploded, "We will not have deviants in this program. There is not a person sitting around this table who would disagree with me."

Gleeson's own office had done an investigation of the Society and come to the conclusion the board and management were dominated by or were all lesbians. He continued to fume, "if these deviants want money they can go rattle their cups in Oxford Street." Oxford Street is the main thoroughfare or drag within the Sydney gay and lesbian precinct. The project died at that moment. This was the meeting of 7 November 1986. I have no idea whether this wonderful archive has ever been converted from the time-ravaged glass slides onto more stable media.

I looked for support from anyone around the table and got none. I had known Stephen Hall, General Manager of the Sydney Festival since when we had worked together at the Australian Opera. He had been a terrific supporter of the Nimrod's Clark Island annual Christmas Children Productions and sponsored them for many years. It was well known he was gay and I felt he may intercede. Stephen looked straight through me. The Society was not getting any help from him.

There is another curious twist to this little recollection further on in the book concerning another person at the meeting who was not yet 'out'.

The next opportunity lost was an offer by David Jones, the up-market retail chain. I was contacted by the Head of PR, Dwayne McHolic. Imperious sits well when describing Dwayne. Unnervingly tall and a chain smoker. American, opinionated and flamboyantly camp. I had originally been introduced to him by Georgie Swift PR for the NSW Retailers Association when the Nimrod benefit was staged in 1983. He was a great Nimrod supporter. We had casually kept in touch until 1986 when the company wanted a spectacular for David Jones card holders and the general public as their contribution to the Sydney events of the Bicentenary.

It was an open-brief to come up with something very special for Dwayne to take to the DJs board. The sponsorship offer was \$500,000 to be matched equally with supplier contributions and modest Bicentennial support. The activity was to offer just two exclusive performances for DJ's customer account card holders then a number of discounted ticket public performances.

Walter and I came back with the idea with the working title *Chess Alive* to be held in a pennanted heraldic pavilion in the Domain with double rows of seating where ticketholders could eat comestibles from the DJs Food Hall while being entertained to a chess match danced by the Sydney Dance Co and the Australian Ballet. Graeme Murphy and Janet Vernon were enthusiastic as were Noel Pelly and Maina Gielgud. We even had the Western Australia Ballet's Barry Moreland chafing at the bit to participate but as it was a New South Wales State event this wasn't possible. But we appreciated the active interest nonetheless in support of the concept.

Walter was very keen as he had a background when young in ballet. When I first floated the performance idea to him he took to it enthusiastically and filled in the technical details of how to stage it immediately.

The Australian Chess Federation – Patrons, businessman John Elliot and politician then Prime Minister, Bob Hawke – would devise the game with the last three moves kept sealed and disclosed by

Craig Laird of the NSW Chess Association. These moves played out by Elliot and Hawke on the sidelines to create suspense.

Channel Nine would supply their light box dance floor augmented to 64 squares and the *Sydney Symphony* and *Icehouse* would provide the special commissioned new musical backing for each dance style from the opposing live chess pieces.

We had in-principle agreement from nearly all the key organisations, the unions and subsidiary sponsor backers sufficient to proceed. A huge effort to present something quite special and memorable. The DJs board approved the idea and it was sent to our Council management for vetting before the formal presentation to a NSW Bicentennial Council meeting. Peter Arnold supported the initiative and sent it to Premier's Department for inclusion in the next agenda. The response was interesting.

In effect; *If Stage by Stage wants to do this then resign your commission and do it independently.* Our contract allowed us to do just that anyway without divorcing from the prime contract. I dug deeper for justification around such a curious decision about what had the potential to be a fantastic high visibility event. We had even proposed that a ballot be held to allocate public performance seats fairly. That itself would achieve massive PR for government and the participant organisations. Here we had a major company stepping forward to engage with serious money to boot and we were telling them to go away while funding others for less impact. Even Arnold went cold and said it would not happen.

I passed the response back to Dwayne who was furious. Using his and DJ's Managing Director Rod Mewings's own network Dwayne found out the government, through Council Chairman Gleeson, saw DJs customer card holders as 'silver tail Liberals' from the Eastern suburbs and would not support the initiative despite the open public performances included under the DJs sponsorship. Gleeson would not put the proposal onto the agenda for broader, full Council discussion. Mewings's comments to me about the outcome were colourful. Rod and Dwayne were

very complimentary to SxS for our work and professionalism. Gleeson saw no parallel conflict in accepting *Bollinger* sponsorship and product supply to launch the NSW Bicentenary Arts and Entertainment Program as offered by Australian CEO Rob Hirst a few months later.

Interestingly, word of this imaginative non-event spread overseas anyway. I was contacted by a Monsieur Burdot of the Canadian Ballet wanting to offer us an exchange tour by Canadian Ballet in 1988 to replace the DJs event if the Australian Ballet could tour Canada in 1989. I referred the enquiry to Maina Gielgud. The itinerary sounded marvellous for the dancers – New York, Montreal, Toronto, Philadelphia, Hong Kong and Singapore for the latter two local festivals. I am not aware it ever happened.

A further example of where Gleeson sat, in directing and controlling activities outside of the supposedly due process of the Bicentennial Council, occurred with a proposal for rock bands to tour New South Wales during 1988. The submission came to our unit from a noted promoter seeking financial support for what was in reality a commercial venture. The proposal would also compete directly with other acts and gigs which were the livelihood of many across the roadie touring circuits of the state. It did not fit the criteria for support. Further, it duplicated a similar program the team had in place for 18-25 year-old audiences using local new artists with some strong support names. This element of the overall program had been endorsed by Gleeson via Michael Joel, our program chairman, early in 1986 but we were told to sacrifice it.

The new submission came firstly to us from Kevin Jacobsen. After the knock-back, he bypassed the unit, going directly to Gleeson and got the OK without any referral back or vetting by the Council. We were directed to find funds to underwrite the tour. At the time there were strong rumours in the industry that Jacobsen's company, Arena Management, needed something like this to get through a rough patch. In any event, the tour was not a

great success and, in my opinion possibly because the gigs were run of the mill nostalgia without local content to engage community interest in celebrating their own talent as part of the bicentennial ethic. Many of the eleven concerts were programmed for March 1988 for blatant pre-election exposure.

Throughout SxS's executive producer contract with government we frequently had to change deals, swap contracts around to cover poor decision-making or get various persons off the hook from undeliverable favours promised. This was valuable insight and experience in politics which would be very useful to me in the future. An example of working in this environment came from the in-house legal officer Jennifer Mora. Mansell had advised Peter Arnold and Gleeson that contract reporting for events within the A&E program were to the Executive Producer (SxS), not the Council Executive Director (Arnold) and this placed me in a position to make decisions outside of the established chain of command. While this had never happened, Mora believed Mansell was on the hunt.

I quickly did a reference paper pointing out that for contracts to that date, a memorandum instructing reporting line change would suffice and any new contracts could easily be amended to conform to changes in internal reporting criteria. I also pointed out the older contracts had been approved by legal and Premier's Office in 1986 so the issue was not one for us but for them to clarify. The recommendation was adopted. However, around a simple issue and an equally simple solution, there were rumours, suspicion and altogether far too much innuendo our unit had to be pulled into line. I was learning even more valuable experiential bureaucratic management lessons. Our style and success rate of just getting on and doing it rubbed others up. I was to note often, over the years past and to come, there are frequent and classic confrontations between *doers vs. judges* and *vision vs. conformity*.

On Tuesday, 16 June 1987 all project staff across all 1988 activities were called together. The meeting was chaired, not by Peter Arnold, but Don Mansell. We were informed the NSW Bicentennial Council had been removed from being subject to the Freedom of

Information Act thereby reversing an open, transparent and inclusive policy set in 1985. A whole new set of operating guidelines were announced and confidentiality lowered on all communication between projects and project clients. No reason was given but changes to programs quickly followed. The aforementioned opportunity of a TV Concert was suddenly under negotiations between us and Channel 9. I was excluded from the final meeting. Mansell passed the paperwork to Jenny Mora who quietly passed them to me. It was a poor deal for the program from Ch9. I made notes and suggestions which Jenny passed back to Mansell without citing the source. Re-negotiation took place and an improved contract emerged. Similarly with Peter Faiman. After a year of negotiations no decision was forthcoming so Faiman pulled out. Panic ensued and I was asked to intercede. Faiman stuck to his guns and left the project. Just silly stuff.

Next, key people were replaced or substituted by bureaucrats. Peter Arnold stayed as director but with constraints and reporting through Mansell. Peter got a gong following 1988 for being a good boy.

The DJs connection opened the way for another creative opportunity to be considered. I had been re-introduced to the Swedish liqueur Aquavit during negotiations with the Stockholm Opera GM over choristers. In 1978 I had attended a Bucks Night for one of the senior Captains of the Scan Austral Line. Evar was marrying Claire, one of Carol's friends. I sat opposite the Swedish Ambassador who told me it was common practice for the Scan line ships to carry a volume of Aquavit in the hold allowing it to mature as it circumnavigated the globe. I like alcohol but mostly in moderation. On the night Aquavit and I mixed so well I cannot recall getting back home on the train.

It occurred to me to do similar with rum essence in the hold of the replica of *HMS Bark Endeavour* which was journeying from the UK to Australia for the bicentenary as part of the *First Fleet Enactment*. Their licensing man, Peter Bower liked the idea and I put in a suggestion from Michael Rudny (to whom I will introduce

you in a moment) to add tea and coffee as potential other stores for bicentennial branding and exclusive limited release merchandising treatment.

Who might market such an exclusive product – we conceived of three strengths of rum, similar to a well known whisky brand, boxed in embossed cartons with a journey map printed on the inside and enclosed in a wooden presentation box. Dwayne McHolic of DJs loved the idea.

I met with a number of marine experts about how to store sufficient concentrated rum essence to make the venture profitable enough to engage the ship expedition company and pay the costs. This essence is treacle like. The solution I offered was the same as the double plastic envelopes inside fuel tankers. This solution would form-fit to fill the space as it inflated with essence and displace other ballast. One hitch. We could not get an insurer to cover the risk as they considered the liquid to be too flammable and a risk to the main venture. Oh well!

In describing the Easter Choral Spectacular I touched on travelling the world to contract choirs to come and participate. Through competitive bidding we commissioned Sydney Business Travel (SBT) to co-ordinate the travel, accommodation, transit, sightseeing and food needs of the many choirs who pledged to come to Sydney. SBT CEO, Michael Rudny travelled with me to handle these logistics. I had proposed, and obtained approval from Bicentennial Council, that all deposits and payments would be made through a bonded trust account covered by the Travel Agents Insurance Scheme so in the event of cancellation or some such, no-one would lose their deposit money. This thankfully didn't have to be invoked.

This careful no risk approach pleased Arnold and Gleeson along with the prospective participants. While some groups would naturally use their national airline carrier, Qantas and British Airways gained the majority of business.

Almost as default I wrote performance contracts and commissioning agreements with Jenny Mora in which I included a

profit share clause. Any surplus from performances was to be reinvested in new work to create a legacy fund benefit to the organisation and audiences beyond 1988. The deal specified a formula in a smaller repayment of surplus which would flow back to the Bicentennial Council. Similarly the purpose was to create a further consolidated legacy fund after 1988. This fund would receive around three point five percent of any surplus to kick it off. But unbeknown to me the Council had been established without the authority, systems and accounting capabilities to receive income. Cheques started arriving in the mail and caused much consternation. I believe the funds were returned with all recipients appreciating the unexpected windfall. Again, what might have been if a little foresight had been used?

There is so much more I could record. What I have endeavoured to do is add some hidden background to some of the huge activity this small team delivered for the 200 year birthday of the State of New South Wales, Australia. It was a great privilege to be a contributing participant.

The allocated funding for visual arts based bicentennial programs was very quickly taken up locally so when another US based opportunity approached us to exhibit a collection of corporate art pieces by renowned American artist Paul Maxwell, from the Dallas-Austin Fairchild Foundation for the Visual Arts represented by Glenn Steinbaugh, I decided to do it myself. The trouble was every nook and cranny of exhibition space for such a large show was already taken.

I happened to casually mention the challenge of finding exhibition space to Graeme Murphy when talking about the Sydney Dance Company's new space at the Wharf. Graeme took one look at Maxwell's work and suggested the large SDC foyer be made into a gallery. The architecture and space dimensions suited our purpose well.

Maxwell's technique is interesting and I encourage readers to research the internet for details and examples. One of his patented techniques is a three dimensional reverse painting

application. He also does decorative art piece poles. The poles we exhibited emulated aboriginal totems and didgeridoos. At the end of the show Paul paid me in works which I still have. I introduced Paul and Glenn to James Mollison of the National Gallery of Australia because Paul wanted to donate a work. I have no idea as to whether this ever happened but Mollison was initially interested following his viewing of the exhibition at the Wharf.

One final tit-bit. Once the program schedule entered 1988 proper the government started to replace various contract and specialist staff with their own people. Many readers might recall this also happened with Olympic Games staff. The process enabled some small fee program savings to be made. But more importantly for government, a lot of their own people were able to be given recognition through achievement awards. However, those acknowledged and rewarded were not the ones who had done the real work of pulling the year together. Walter and I were contractors and were paid for services. We have no gripe with our contract and recognition. But too many others were moved aside to facilitate favours.

In November 1994, many of the 'survivors' came together for a ten year anniversary. It was wonderful.

In early 1987 we were alerted to problems with the national arts and entertainment program. SxS had consulted on the early program content but Gleeson didn't like us working at both State and Federal levels simultaneously. I don't know why because we were able to share touring resources and make cost effective linkages between both programs to everyone's benefit. I have already noted an earlier involvement with the national program prior to our State contract. Therefore, I regarded the federal connection as preceding the State contract and so Walter and I quietly helped restructure some elements and deals to rebalance collapsed projects and allow the infighting among staff to be settled through redirecting energies towards a fresh start.

Near the end of our term, we started to find increasing direct interference by bureaucrats in day-by-day process. I have quite

revealing notes from an exchange between a group of program workers and one of Gleeson's staff, Don Mansell. Mansell left us in no doubt community needs and wants around events in 1988 had little meaning to the current government, he would personally change anything to fit the government's agenda or to meet Gerry Gleeson's expectations and presumed preferences.

Now some will say as the government was paying for the program they had the right to dictate when they thought fit. Perhaps. But genuine community consultation and honest engagement had been a hallmark of the program winning such strong support from industry and community groups. Yet here he was dumping all that goodwill and telling us he would happily act against community wishes if he thought that was what was either needed or wanted by his boss.

The A&E Program had a budget of six million dollars. It was calculated we returned an economic benefit of some fourteen million dollars through our efforts. We were all very proud of this projected outcome. Premier Neville Wran was a great arts supporter, as my story evidences, so the change to Barry Unsworth as Premier might have affected Gleeson and his staff's approach somewhat.

In refreshing my recall around these events from my diaries, I also recollect a story which circulated the year before in 1986 when Neville Wran stepped out of office as Premier. The story tells of a conversation between Wran and Gleeson about Gleeson's interest in eventually working in the commercial sector. Undoubtedly, Wran would have had some expectation of being offered some appointments when he left office. Instead Wran told Gleeson in recent times as Head of Premier's, Gleeson had become of less use as an advisor to himself as Premier because Gleeson seemed to be telling Wran what he thought the Premier wanted to hear rather than what he needed to know. This is of course what all of Gleeson's staff did to Gleeson because he bit back hard when displeased with news he didn't want to hear. It's a meaningful story about fearless and honest wise counsel. How much truth

is in the story? Certainly Mansell's testimony to us in that room resounded loudly.

I am aware I have written much here about Gleeson and my experiences with him. He was the most powerful bureaucrat in the State but he had flaws. Gerry is on record saying "I want to be respected". His own words. Yet, he appears to have offered little respect to others if he felt so inclined. In closing my comments I will relate a further episode which occurred at the Council meeting of Friday, 13 March 1987 – Black Friday and the start of the Ides of March.

This performance was repeated at the meeting of 24 April. Gleeson went on an attack of the arts and entertainment program despite every element having been subjected to scrutiny and approved already, some with glowing recommendations. Words such as 'arts rort' and 'waste' peppered the vitriol from Gleeson. Stephen Hall changed sides and supported Gleeson against his fellow A&E subcommittee members. Joel and Hoy were furious. Stephen and Sydney Festival knew whom to court for survival. Support for the arts was in an uncertain time back then under the new Premier Barry Unsworth, whom we had nicknamed *The Cardigan Kid* for his old fashioned attire. I wonder if, under Neville Wran, Gerry actually disliked the arts but had to deliver on the Premier's preferences. Wran had been Minister for the Arts in a prior cabinet, but the role passed to Frank Walker. I was to have an interesting interaction with him as well.

I spoke to Stephen after 1988 about his quisling act. He laughed at what he saw as survival from him and naivety from me. Stephen was widely mistrusted for such acts by the industry. We all approached any dealings with him with caution and an expectation of last minute changes to his advantage. Still, Stephen Hall was a huge contributor to the arts in Australia in a positive way which cannot be diminished.

But, back to the staged tirade. The Arts and Entertainment Program was about to be announced having passed muster up

to then. Gleeson tore into the program to the amazement of Michael Joel and Alan Hoy. I have never seen such grandstanding and posturing containing misleading facts and figures to pick something apart. Items agreed two-years past and almost completed, e.g. an Australian Opera partnership, our *Summer Rain* commission and programmes to introduce regional youth to the arts were described as 'self-indulgent wanks'. Of course he was paving the way for the Jacobsen deal to gain validity as a people's tour and for cuts to other programme elements to make budget available for the purpose.

Outside of the meeting, Joel and Hoy took Hall to task unsuccessfully but ultimately rolled over and let the appalling critique stand. I made certain, except for our accommodation of the rock bands tour, nothing else really changed. I spoke to Michael Joel about it a few years later. He laughed it off unconvincingly. Don Mansell however revelled in the attack and saw it as permission to interfere even further. Despite his best efforts the team, the industry and participants delivered superbly.

While the vast majority of my Stage by Stage time was dedicated to the organisation and delivery of the arts and entertainment program, Walter delivered our commercial tasks. One is worth mentioning as an example of diversity and creativity. Mazda were to launch their new soft top roadster in Canberra. SxS successfully pitched for the event. Ross Olney, Mazda Sales Director had high expectations something special would happen on the night. It did.

We needed to hide the car and for it to make a grand entrance following some sort of on-stage spectacle using other vehicle models in the range. The natural 'hiding' place was the orchestra pit which was hydraulic. To give effect to a covering and keep the car hidden we suspended 4,000 sheets of light blue tissue paper on cotton strands which would break and fall away as the car rose from below. Carol cellotaped many sheets together twice. One for rehearsal and one for the performance reveal. Using water effect projections Walter created an effect like a lake hiding the

stage and pit, filters and lighting. It looked sensational. It took a week for Carol's knees to recover from the effort.

When the reveal was done dancer and singer Natalie Mosco was to press the soft-top release button and rise out of the car seats as the top folded into its compartment. We had over rehearsed. The button broke and she instead had to climb out of the door. Thank goodness she is a stunner and it went off OK but only just.

The entertainment lead into this 'climax' was a driving display choreographed for eight Mazda cars doing a routine across the Canberra Theatre Centre stage into the wings out of the opposite rear doors turning in the car park and re-entering the course and all at speed. The Canberra Theatre Co GM, Simon Dawkins was very nervous and took out extra insurance cover once we told him what was planned.

The outcome was thrilling and had a very high wow factor. I had engaged the Canberra Police Academy Driving School, showed them the space and provided the music tracks, they did the rest. Not a single scratch or bump happened on any car. Naturally, the Academy and Mazda were thrilled it worked. The Academy staff and drivers loved the opportunity to do something so innovative. Incidentally, SxS created an audio cassette of the vehicle choreography music which was copied by Mazda and used in all demonstration test drives.

I did this event while recovering from a very scary occurrence. One morning some weeks prior in February 1987, I had awoken and was blind in my right eye. Overnight a blood clot formed and had covered the central field of vision. Experts thought I may have been overly stressed or taken a head bump, which I could not recall, causing two overlapping veins to wear away. They were also concerned as I had some fifty percent chance of the same occurring in the left eye.

With treatment being some four hundred laser shots the clot mass has coalesced into a shadow covering some forty percent of the central field of vision. Thankfully the left eye is still fine.

The brain adapted to look around the mass with assistance from a special Zeiss lens. The technology and surgical skills to remove the mass now exist but I am told the brain is unlikely to correct back, so it remains as it is. I get some headaches behind the eye when stressed.

My attitude to things over which I have no control, which cannot be remedied, and which don't slow me down is to ignore them or work to compensate for them and get on with life.

As I write this chapter the first Jesuit Pope, *Francis I* has been inaugurated. In May 1986, I received a call from Peter Townley on behalf of actor Steven Grives. They requested my assistance in raising the production budget for a film based on the book by English author David Yallop *In God's Name*. Steven and his wife Debbie had the rights through their company Caralel. We worked up the US fifteen million dollar budget, made some casting recommendations and went out to find the money.

Two years later, we had milked all of our contacts, and those of many others. Mal Read of Triad Films had invested a huge effort to assist us and needs recognition for work which included negotiations to option Dustin Hoffman whose agent responded with '*He would be very happy to read a script in due course*'. Of course this was way short of a firm commitment by his agent but we had permission to use the Hoffman name in negotiations.

For a third time we had reached eighty percent of the money needed. On the prior occasions the mix was so volatile various elements left, rejoined or changed the deal to suit them and others, but not us. German interests got spooked when they believed the film would be anti-catholic. Other interests dubbed it *The Catholic Watergate* and wanted to sensationalise events beyond reality which we just didn't want to do. Columbia (Putnam) wanted TV rights. But Catholic interests in Rotterdam were consistent investors to forty percent of the budget in each iteration of capital raising.

My notes are a global who's who of studios and persons in the trade. The closest we got to success involved talks with RevCom

following a visit to the Cannes film Festival by Mal and I think possibly Steven also. A deal covering the full projected production budget was offered, provided Roman Polanski directed with Sergio Leone composing the score. It started off with high hopes only to mysteriously evaporate with calls to RevCom going unreturned. Someone bigger had called a halt. As happens, hardly had one door shut but another creaked ajar.

An LA lawyer named Gunter Schiff called to suggest he could get Paul Newman as director and Stirling Silliphant as screenwriter. Schiff also represented actor George Kennedy. Brian Dennehy's agent wanted him to play Archbishop Marcinkus. This too wasted time and went nowhere. Tony Malone of Hoyts passed the script, which he loved, to Brian Rosen who passed it to Jerry Weintraub of WEG financed by Columbia. And, on it all went. Putnam/Columbia and Pandora of Belgium; ORION and Mace Neufeld; Weintraub/UA/Paramount; Sanwa Bank/Rothschild/UA/RevCom Richard Price TV Assoc for a mini-series on PrimeTime UK; Barry Cooper as he bid for RKO Pictures and so on ... This was a fascinating experience. We knew our project had come to be noticed despite it being ultimately as attractive as radioactive waste.

The stresses and strain of the negotiations were hard on us all. Up and down, maybe, possibly, yes, no and so on. Steven became more difficult to deal with and parties pushed for him to step aside as Executive Producer. One of the people assisting us package the deal was negotiating with Lloyds Bank over a twenty million dollar deal of which *In God's Name* was to take the deal total to thirty-five million. Hermann le Vee was furious when Lloyds dumped our film due to concerns over Steven. Financier accountant, Ian Winlaw, and I had some terse meetings with Steven over many issues so I understood why Lloyds acted as they had done.

My conversations with Steven were getting more and more strained. Silly accusations and snide remarks peppered his conversations. The stress was terrible but was on all of us equally. In one spectacular exchange I simply hung up the phone. Steven, Peter Townley and I were coming to the end of our relationship.

I started to step away from being the buffer between financiers and Steven as the executive producer. Steven had to face the reality he had little support for his EP role from the money sources.

The very nature of a film about the possible murder of Pope John Paul I, only 33 days into his Papacy, meant prospective investors were easy to spook. John Paul I died in September 1978, so the event was relatively recent.

To quickly provide background to those readers who haven't read the book or heard about the case – Wikipedia extract:

Yallop proposes the theory that the Pope was in 'potential danger' because of corruption in the Instituto per le Opere Religiose (IOR, Institute of Religious Works, the Vatican's most powerful financial institution, commonly known as the Vatican Bank), which owned many shares in Banco Ambrosiano. The Vatican Bank lost about a quarter of a billion dollars. This corruption was real and is known to have involved the bank's head, Paul Marcinkus, along with Chairman Roberto Calvi of the Banco Ambrosiano. Calvi was a member of P2, an illegal Italian Masonic lodge. Calvi was found dead in London, after disappearing just before the corruption became public. His death was initially ruled suicide, and a second trial — ordered by his family — then returned an 'open verdict'.

The day before Calvi's corpse was discovered, his secretary also 'committed suicide' by falling from a fourth floor office window at the bank's headquarters. A note was found which attacked Calvi for bringing the bank into disrepute.

Yallop also offers as suspects Archbishop John Patrick Cody of Chicago, whom he believes Luciani was about to force into retirement, and Cardinal Jean-Marie Villot, because of his supposed theological differences with the new pope.

Subsequent even to this extract date, a verdict has been rendered in the UK that Calvi was most likely murdered. On 27 June 2013, Pope Francis initiated a further enquiry into the Vatican Bank's operations. But where am I heading?

In our hearts we knew getting the last parcel of money in place was almost impossible. But I had an idea. Was there a way to get

paid for not producing the film? I proposed to Steven we put such a case to interests in Rome who may well accept just to get rid of us. Might such a bold move work? We saw little downside in trying. Boy, were we wrong!

Through my association with fellow producer Peter Townley and our mutual link to Paul Riomfalvy, Paul made connections to certain parties in Hungary. Whoever they were, and I am led to believe they may have been questionable, they connected to their partner organisation in Italy to obtain a name and contact for a high official within the Vatican Bank. Within the week Peter gave me a card with only a telephone number on it. Peter had been told by Paul if I called between certain hours I would most assuredly be speaking to someone senior enough to listen and act. No name was given. Peter just smiled.

With opportunity in hand, and only requiring action, we spent a further week considering our options. A parcel of small investors in a syndicate dropped out and we bit the bullet.

At Steven Grives' home at the appointed hour, to get the time difference aligned, I made the call. The call answered and the conversation went something like this;

"Pronto."

"Good Morning, Do you speak English please?

"Yes.

"I am calling from Australia and represent interests involved in producing a certain film based on a certain book. We have a proposition to put which might interest parties at your end. Can you take this message and pass it along?

"Yes.

"We realise our actions may be injurious to some and as we are about to commit to final funding we wanted to see if your interests might prefer to pay us not to produce the film. The film business is risky. We have no guarantees the project will be profitable to recover our costs so far. We would then let the rights lapse as they are due soon.

"Leave this information with me." and hung up.

A week later Steven called me very agitated. It was nearly midnight. He and his family had been visited by two men and told in no uncertain terms to drop the project. Steven and his family left Australia soon afterwards for the USA where he did well in his profession. I have not spoken to Steven Grives since although I sent him a note upon his return to Australia. I got no reply..

We had not used any names, nor left phone numbers or an address, or mentioned the project by name. Steven swore Peter and me to secrecy over the call. Peter said he had kept the card with the number for many years. Until now I had no reason to ask for it and he has now passed away.

As more than twenty-years have passed, given some of the characters have passed away and given the recent UK verdict reversal plus the current Pope's own actions, I think now is the time to reveal these details. Peter Townley believed the unwelcome visitors were *Illuminati*. But then Peter loved conspiracies.

I am fairly certain the voice on the line was American but only gleaned that viewpoint from the last few words. During my term with Morris West I had provided Paul Riomfalvy with credentials for some tasks in Budapest. All above board. My credit with Paul was good so Townley pressed for more disclosure. It turns out Peter and Paul had connections with Sydney's Hungarian Mafia. They, in turn, connected to sister or brother organisations in Italy. These questionable connections, in turn, provided the direct telephone line of Archbishop Marcinkus, head of the Vatican Bank. Was it he? I cannot be certain.

On February 26, 1987 arrest warrants had been issued against Marcinkus and two other bank officials. By July, these had been invalidated because the issuing court was found not to have jurisdiction over Vatican matters. Marcinkus returned to work. The Archbishop did step down as bank head in 1989 and became Governor of Vatican City for a year before retiring. He died in 2006.

In June 1987 I was contacted by an author Neil Munro with a script titled *Michael of Man*. I read and offered many notes on

the story line which were accepted and incorporated. But just as Munro seemed to be interested in asking for help with financing he was off to the US. I lost contact with Neil. Some years later as I watched the DeVito/Schwarzenegger film *Junior* I cast my mind back to Munro's male-birth 'mother' script but discounted any connection given Neil's *Michael* was a messianic figure. But in film-land who knows?

Peter Townley and his partner Sharon didn't marry until their two stunning daughters were almost twenty-one. They just never got around to it until then. Peter had a marvellously creative mind. I want to recognise him as a friend and for his creativity. I will give you just one example.

In July of 1986, Doug Christie asked me to help Peter develop an idea to market pet horoscopes. The product marketing name Peter created was *MyStarPet*, the holding company was to be *Animology*. I liked the idea and developed a plan for Peter. While creative, Peter lacked the wherewithal to implement the plan although he made connections with noted astrologers Richard Sterling and Helen Hope. Richard wanted in but his agent also wanted a majority holding which made the deal so unworkable we walked-away from using him. Helen saw us as competitors to her books and dropped out.

Planning, talks, ideas and everything but development went on interminably. Neither Doug nor Peter had the capacity to complete character research and to create the astrological outlines so we had no real examples of our stuff to show people. By 1988 my frustration was such I sat down, did the research and wrote the first twelve horoscopes for dogs and cats. More time passed, years in fact, and still tarmac wasn't being laid so I too walked away from what was a one-sided effort. Peter held all the materials and even commissioned some nice graphics.

More years were to pass and eventually the internet offered a new marketing and sales platform to the idea. However, Peter wasn't a child of the digital age, so he was still not able to get the concept up in any meaningful way despite my further assistance

with a crude website in the little spare time I could fit in between other involvements and obligations. When Peter passed away he left all the material for his idea to me including the trade-mark. Some years before he had both legs amputated, took to artificial legs remarkably well but his health declined. I miss him. Perhaps, once this book is behind me I can then get his idea up and running as a tribute. It is still a clever idea because we owners love our pets as family.

By mid-November 1987 the government was moving more of their people into key positions in the NSW Bicentennial Council organisation. People who had invested their time, contact and effort to make the various programmes work were dropped from invitation lists. This even included our A&E business-leader sub-committee members who were furious with the disrespect and cold-shoulder treatment. When complaints were made together with threats of media stories, invitations and tickets magically reappeared. It was all so clumsily done.

A small hint of change was not being able to print business cards any more although we went through them at a furious rate. SxS's contract was wound down from 11 January 1988. We were put onto as needed status. This turned out to be fine with us as our hourly rate went up significantly and there were some big ticket items to deliver in performance.

Overall, Stage by Stage was congratulated on '*an excellent execution of role*' in developing and implementing the 1988 NSW Bicentennial Arts and Entertainment Program. Walter and I each got a plaque as the respective Executive Producers. A nice achievement.

A chapter closing note. As Christmas 1987 approached various organisations with which the A&E unit had dealt with over the years sent us 'Thank you' and Seasonal gifts for our efforts. They didn't reach the A&E Unit but mysteriously went missing. We were alerted to something being wrong because of follow-up calls by some senders calling to confirm delivery or asking if our staff liked the items. Karen and I investigated and found out the

deliveries were being intercepted at reception by the executive and kept.

When challenged, the Executive Director firstly said it was inappropriate for individuals to accept gifts from clients. I asked what would be done with them because we should inform the senders and offer to return them. There was an incredulous smile and chuckle which I took as a not-going-to-happen. I then played my ace. Two items to go astray were personal gift orders paid for by unit staff. Proof of ownership was in the engraving and in receipts. Whether the A&E Unit got back all gifts isn't known but boxes of our stuff were available for us to claim two days later. Personal property appeared on desks, opened and resealed. I assume they took longer to get back from now disappointed recipients. All so ridiculously stupid and petty.

SxS was doing nicely with a reputation for excellence and trustworthiness, Producers used SxS to budget and develop production schedules for ideas, plan tours and investigate various options. The list included *Tilly Devine*, *Chorus Line*, *Seven Little Australians*, *Moulin Rouge*, *High Society*, a tour by *Mickey Rooney*, *Blood Brothers* and *Steel Magnolias* to name just a few. We even had a call from Dick Pratt who wanted a budget for a co-production of the opera *Aida* by Giuseppe Verdi mounted with the AETT for the latter part of 1988 or early 1989. The partnering with AETT was to facilitate easier negotiations with the unions involved.

John Woodland had taken one of the five departmental director positions with the Trust so our dealings were in capable hands. We did budgets, production schedules, liaison with Europera and La Scala and scouted local venues of sufficient size. My connections with Ashton's Circus provided access to elephants. Pratt offered one million dollars initial financing but we simply could not get enough indoor venues of a size to stage the production or the number of tickets needed to be sold to recover costs.

Our 'call-back' with the Bicentennial Council to do work was lucrative but complicated due to bureaucratic interference. Easson and others were using SxS to unofficially double

check their partnering involvement in EXPO'88 and Australian Bicentenary Authority arts activity, so we did well from their line of work plus being responsible for the Choral Spectacular and Marching Bands. The latter rehearsed in North Sydney Oval. Yamaha became a sponsor through Donald van Nooten at 2UE. The *Trojans* were offered to perform at the NSW Rugby League main game by Graham Foster. I left their administrator Bill Lutt to confirm this and performances I set up at Old Sydney Town. Throughout all this time, I took particular delight in reminding Mansell our work was billed in three-hour minimums so he had better fill in time with worthwhile content. He struggled to fill the time allotment adequately each time but was desperate for the assistance. Walter and I did well out of it.

Walter, among other projects, was doing budgets for a dance spectacular from Antonio Vargas who claims a Guinness Book record for the fastest number of Flamenco taps. This got us involved with the Sydney Spanish community which was a lot of fun. This connection also cemented a great friendship with Jose Blanco who was the country head of Bank Santander in Australia for some twenty-years. Jose is a great cooking and food companion. In 2009 Carol and I plus twenty others toured northern Spain with Jose and his wife, Leona, as guides on a Michelin peppered foodie tour. It was fantastic.

Bruce Sherlock had been Carol's and my life insurance agent since 1978. He was a repeat qualifier for the Million Dollar Round Table of insurance brokers in Australia. In early 1987, Bruce and a Western Australian financier friend, Leigh Turner, had an idea to sell special insurance bonds and through this attempt a restructure of the national arts funding base. They called them Arts Bonds. Bruce and Leigh needed someone who understood the sector, knew the players and who could devise just how the scheme would work in practical terms. I was brought on-board and developed the plan.

With insurance industry, State and Federal government support a new form of insurance bond flexibility towards creating a

single integrated capital fund would eventually take over all State and Federal arts funding. A twenty year ramp-up timeline and a massive policy shift of government grants to corporate and private sourcing was proposed. Greg Jones, a ministerial adviser to Frank Walker, ticked off the concept following a confirmation meeting with Legal and General. L&G were just one of many other insurance bond issuers who would participate and pay 'interest in advance' as required by the scheme to build the working capital base of the new fund.

I took the idea to Ken Tribe to test his reaction. He was very positive as to the potential and advised on functional and structural suggestions across different creative forms. Ken expressed some interest in perhaps joining the inaugural board to set up the initiative.

Turner had already obtained in-principle agreement from Treasurer Keating to construct this national fund using tax incentives. Prepayment of interest from the bonds purchased would activate the proposed fund formally called The National Arts Endowment Trust but which I had dubbed with the working title *The Medici Fund*.

The scheme would provide incentives for wealthy individuals and corporates to contribute towards building a tax deductible driven contribution fund covering all arts sectors including film and television and relacing all other sources of support over time. NSW was to lead. I also showed how the scheme could be adapted to support sport as well.

In October 1987, a two page high-level briefing paper was sent by Jones to the Premier's Department marked *Confidential*. The Premier's office and Evan Williams were asked to comment on the practicality of the scheme. I was to re-draft the main expansive document once the feedback was received, assuming it got the go ahead. It would then be submitted to Minister Walker for final consideration as soon as possible afterwards. To my surprise Williams was cautiously supportive. I was told this by Jones, not by Evan, because my authorship of the document

had not been revealed to Evan at the time just in case this muddied the waters.

In parallel with this exciting innovation being vetted by Premier's, the final A&E Program went forward for approval. There was some fear it would not get final approval and be announced on schedule due to off handed comments by Mansell suggesting a lack of confidence in the program organising team. Michael Joel was nervous. Stephen Hall would not engage. Don Mansell revelled in our frustration and concern. On Friday, 16 October the Council held its meeting. I was asked not to attend by Joel to lessen any risk of a potential fiery exchange between Gleeson and me; a sensible strategy.

Michael Joel returned to our unit and just couldn't keep a straight face to fool us into thinking we were dudged. The full A&E Program including the sensitive indigenous elements had been approved. All we had to do was finalise the brochure then follow through with the announcement sponsored by Bollinger. Wonderful news and vindication of our foresight, programming, program composition and industry backing. The team were immensely proud and were heartily congratulated by Chairman Joel.

I was to learn about a year later the *Medici Fund* proposal was so well regarded as a document authored by me it influenced the final approval of the A&E Program as being well considered, innovative and having very strong industry support.

Based on comments and feedback, Jones provided details of questions to be answered and what needed to be amended or changed in the draft *Medici Fund* document. I had had some dealings over the A&E Regional Touring Festivals Program with NSW Lotteries head Brian Schmidt. I had worked into the fund document a lottery syndication scheme to further extend the funds base but, while it was regarded as innovative, this could not apparently be done unless the Lotteries Act was changed. Consequently, this segment was taken out for further consideration at a later time when legislation could be amended to allow for it to work.

Sherlock and Turner confirmed more support from across the insurance industry. Mallesons gave a provisional legal opinion to the government and the government insurance office GIO agreed to join the mix of new bond product facilitators. I did the redraft and expanded on the sporting opportunity. The final document went to the Minister. Unofficially, our project team was advised the State Government intended to approve the initiative once a final check was done by Premier's. Consent to formally submit was received by Jones and we waited.

After a very nervous December and January of waiting with little contact, in February 1988 we had confirmation. The press release was ready and approved. Key industry people had been brought into the tight circle of *those-in-the-know* in order for them to speak positively about the initiative when asked. Jones advised Turner that Premier Unsworth was likely to make the announcement on Monday or Tuesday, 15 or 16 February in a policy speech to be delivered at the Power House Museum. I have a diary note which says – *favoured election date is 19 March 1988 - bottom of the page as an afterthought.*

Later that same month, on the day we were to have signed the papers to establish the trust by the NSW Arts Minister Frank Walker, we all gathered in the Minister's offices for the ceremony and a press announcement to follow. I offered the Minister my Cartier pen, a gift from my staff at Nimrod, to sign the documents to create *The Medici Fund*. His PA approached and advised the Premier was on the line and it was urgent.

When the Minister returned he informed us the Premier had just issued the writs for the State election to be held on 19 March 1988. As the former State Attorney-General he knew he could not sign the document once he received advice of the Writs. We had to wait until after the election. Labour lost the March 1988 election.

On 15 March Barry Hughes of Paul Keating's office had advised the scheme's tax deduction criteria were acceptable to the feds and also had Graham Richardson's full support. The Premier had formally signed off on the final documentation that day.

My work to develop the plan was jointly funded by Sherlock and Turner plus the then Labour State Government through the Ministry for Arts, Housing and Aboriginal Affairs. The arts budget was skint. Minister Walker also wanted to keep the Department of the Arts away from interfering in the development phase of the trust. Evan Williams had eventually found out I was the consultant and was not happy. My payments were submitted directly to the Minister's office and although made out to the Arts portfolio were paid by Housing. A potential minor political points scoring awaiting.

Peter Collins the new Arts Minister and great friend of Evan Williams smelled a media story but needed me to verify and validate details. I knew Collins pretty well from Nimrod days; in fact we were due to have dinner together with his wife Dominique and Carol early February but put it off due to the pending election. My last payment was declined unless I provided all details. I felt I could not, given confidentiality issues, so I was left out of pocket. Williams successfully canned the scheme and Keating's support evaporated also due to the change in government.

The Labour government had agreed on my being the front-runner inaugural Executive Director of the trust which would manage the fund. My appointment also had Ken Tribe's and Australia Council endorsement. I felt sick with the loss of opportunity and potential to make this creation happen. Ken Tribe had a list of potential trustee board members in his head and had mentioned prominent lawyer and eventually Justice Kim Santow, ad-man Michael Magnus and Macquarie University Vice Chancellor Di Yerbury, all from New South Wales and some interstate names I can't now recall to make up a nationally representative board. These suggestions had been put to Greg Jones in December 1987 and were well received.

Now you may well think, "Why not present the proposal to the new government?" I knew the Minister and the new Premier Nick Greiner. I had good credentials from my track record and industry work. I was seen as politically neutral and it would benefit the

Liberal's funding of the arts and sport anyway. Donald McDonald, GM of the Sydney Theatre Company and Max Bourke, the new GM of the Australia Council for the Arts also backed the creation of the fund. By September, Max had Keating agreeing to use a national fund announcement to counter Liberal policy in NSW and other States. Justin Macdonnell would front for Bourke with government to assist in proposing the trust to other states of Australia. Justin and I briefed all State Arts Directors on 11 October 1988. They were enthusiastic about the opportunity.

We prepared a new version of the document aimed at the new administration and Michael Yabsley assisted me get it into the right hands. In April I met with Minister Collins' new Arts Policy Advisor Nora Isert and was surprised to find all of the original file material on *The Medici Fund* had been destroyed. I was able to recreate the materials and resubmitted.

I took a cautious approach to Isert after a warning from Chris Westwood and wisely so as it turned out. Nora had been regarded as a bit of a whiz-kid under Neville Wran but had been pushed out by Gleeson. The new arts sector plan, currently under review, was to bring all arts back under one administration. This made little difference to the fund concept. Isert and Evan Williams finally had to let Leigh Turner and me see Minister Collins. Yabsley and Bob Roland-Smith were applying pressure on my behalf and sooner or later Peter Collins and I would talk at an arts event anyway.

Our departmental briefings started with two meetings. First with Isert and Williams, who had a completely wrong interpretation of the proposal and saw it as a threat rather than a funding boost benefit. The defensiveness from both was frustrating. By the time we met an hour later with the Minister, Leigh and I had demolished their misinformed objections and offered written follow-up on each point. They begrudgingly had to agree establishing the fund would significantly change the course of arts support for the better. Collins asked for a three page synopsis.

We received a reply to our follow-up material to the Minister asking a range of further questions which we answered. Then

dead silence. Much later I discovered through James, or was it Kerry McInerney of the arts office, it was Isert who was sitting on my final account looking for a way to not pay it and working to thwart the proposal. Well, surprise, surprise, she found it.

Following much checking by the minders, it turned out Greg Jones was Leigh Turner's brother-in-law. That sort of close relationship and suspicions about loyalties blocked any alternate avenue of support for an idea which had originated on the other side of politics. Evan Williams and she were able to 'spook' the Minister into not proceeding. Collins wrote to Leigh Turner in October 1988 showing little support. Bruce Sherlock had his actuaries do a risk analysis on trying to use either the Australia Council or the AETT as alternative sponsors.

David Thomson at the Australia Council did push for the AC itself to possibly set-up the fund as Max Bourke had secured organisations funding in the August 1988 budget from the federal government and was prepared to venture further with the proposal. So I was surprised when Turner and Sherlock walked away. Nora Isert was asked to resign from the department in January 1989.

In 1994, Bruce Sherlock was to executive produce the movie *The Phantom* having obtained the film and TV rights from Lee Falk. He reprised this producer role in 2008 by announcing the imminent filming of *The Phantom Legacy*. We are still waiting. I had coffee with Bruce when he set out to EP the first film and offered him some insight into the Hollywood machine. I am sure he now knows more than I. The deal to film *Phantom* was developed in 1988 as a possible two film deal along with *In God's Name*. I can't but see humour in these two projects being such unlikely partners.

The original budget for *Phantom* was twenty-two million dollars Australian. Filming was proposed in Australia (Northern Queensland), Fiji and Kenya with George Segal as a potential star. Village Roadshow asked for a budget raising fee of fifteen percent.

Also at this time SxS was asked to participate in *Live Earth* a ten hour global broadcast by the Turner TV Network in the US involving the Live Earth Foundation, Earth Repair Foundation and Earth Aid proposed by Viscount Combe de Carpentier and spanning USA, Canada, USSR, India, Britain and Australia. Fabulous concept. Darryl Braithwaite wanted in as did Gavin Disney and Darryl Summers with *Hey! Hey! It's Saturday*. It never got off the ground.

Meanwhile, I was being approached to connect people with project funding. Somehow I was a go-to for introductions. The diaries are littered with connections – Barbara Cail, then in publishing, put her partner Ralph Tobias in touch and I facilitated him meeting Ian Carnegie, brother of Sir Roderick, over a project; Graham Carruthers of INFORVision with banking connections following a float plan from Ian Plater of Arthur Andersons; David Goold and his *Berthrite* mooring system with the Maritime Services Board's Derek Webster, David's *Writesoft* and *Computer Based Training* for maritime boat licences program with financiers; and so on.

Derek Webster and Bob Rowland-Smith came to me requesting a concept to identify St James' Church with the bicentenary. I had worked with Derek previous to his appointment to the Maritime Services Board and Roland-Smith had introduced himself to me at a luncheon at Parliament House. We dined there a few times as I put flesh on *The Medici Fund* sports extension. Anyway, Bob and Derek asked SxS to develop an educational entertainment which St James could embrace and stage linking the church to early Sydney settlement, the harbour and various historic events.

SxS offered a *son et lumiere* (sound and light show). This gave us the ability to use projection, music, laser light, lighting, actors and other elements to hold attention and get the message across. I introduced the guys to potential source funds for them to negotiate direct. SxS made its contribution a success-based fee and a contract to stage the event once approved and funded. Both Bob and Derek were persuasive and the funds were identified. They took the proposition to the St James Parish Council.

To their surprise they were accused of offering a program which glorified war and conquest because aspects of military involvement in Australia's history were included in the story. How exactly you avoid or leave out such basic elements of the time and still deliver an authentic and accurate historic narrative is beyond me. Bob was furious and quite uncomplimentary to his fellow church wardens. I had done the work on spec and as SxS was out of pocket on the cancellation Bob wanted us to know of his appreciation for effort and support.

As part of the display SxS had proposed linking the harbour to St James Church which is at the northern end of Sydney's Hyde Park along Macquarie Street with a laser light stream which excited the technicians who we asked to design it no end. Oh well!!

Also arising from the bicentennial contract and my prior work with Nimrod and Morris West, I was regularly asked to speak and present on arts administration, creativity and financial modelling at various seminars and conferences. Not all paid but worthwhile for reputation building and name exposure. I was to expand and develop these presentations into a nice line of paid work in years to come.

My brother telephoned me on 12 April 1988. Our mother Moya, who had survived stomach cancer years before, had had enough and wanted to die. She had constant hiccups and was in hospital drifting in and out of consciousness. I needed to come to Brisbane and say goodbye. I said 'No'. I felt so divorced from her I felt nothing. Carol interceded and I got on a plane.

Terry picked me up from the airport and said Moya seemed to be in a coma and likely to go at any time. He left me alone with her when we arrived at St Vincent's Hospital. I stood looking at this person whom I did not like but felt compelled to kiss her forehead. Moya opened her eyes and said, "I knew you would come." Moya Geraldine Donovan died on Wednesday, 13 April 1988.

I found her situation ironic. Moya didn't go to church unless it was what I call, a 'display-day'; one of the major Catholic celebration days like Christmas, All Saints Day or Good Friday when

parishioners dressed up and acted like they were all dedicated souls. Hypocrisy. Moya would ask Vince and me to pray for her. Now there she lay racked with hiccups which would eventually strain her heart beyond tolerance. I thought of the parallel between her and Pope Pius XII who was also racked with hiccups in his final hours.

Even in death Moya had the last word. She donated her remains to the Department of Anatomy at the University of Queensland. Her reason for this was two-fold. Firstly, she had an unusual case of arthritides and second, she wanted to save money. Over a decade later the University called and said "Thanks, you can have her back for burial." The ever crafty old woman had tried to avoid funeral costs by the donation not realising they would return the left-overs eventually. Moya was cremated.

Many years later, my sister-in-law Christine said I should visit my mother's grave in Toowong Cemetery and tell her what I thought of her and get it off my chest. I told Chris I had nothing to say. Writing in this book is about as much as I have said since.

My brother was executor of our Moya's estate. Her will specified any assets were to be split between us fifty / fifty. I had walked away but Terry had been trapped. With Carol's agreement I gave Terry an extra twenty-five percent of the estate. I suppose it was compensation for his pain and suffering, in my mind anyway.

Cleaning out the house of Moya's personal belongings proved interesting. She still had ball-gowns, hats, handbags, stockings and shoes all in matching sets, from the good old days. It was a wonderful collection which we donated to the Queensland Opera wardrobe. A few had no underarms left, having decayed away from the 4711 used to mask sweat. The cost of dry-cleaning was too prohibitive for the family I suppose.

I was aware when I worked at David Jones my mother would order a frock or outfit for an occasion outing afterwards returning it as unsuitable under the DJs policy of always taking something back if it didn't suit the customer. A three year gap was Moya's record. She asked and they accepted the item back. She had cheek, especially as some gowns were featured in the social page photos of the event.

While the majority of furnishing and objects d'art were to be sold, Christine reserved swathes of stuff for herself. Frankly I didn't care but I wanted a few items. I told Terry what I wanted. It was up to him to sort it out with his wife. Carol and I went for a walk. I got what I asked for with cold shoulder thrown in.

One item was a WWII hand-safe used for small military payroll or document transport. It contained just two items. A fifteen centimetre square of grey thin sheet metal painted an off khaki and surprisingly light. It was a piece of a Japanese aircraft made entirely of magnesium. On Guy Fawkes Night Dad would cut off a whisker thin strand of the metal and ignite it with a sparkler. The resultant white light fascinated us as kids.

The other object was a medal from the Queensland Amateur Swimming Championships in 1940. My Dad was the Secretary, as noted earlier. Peter J Duffy came second in diving. For some reason he didn't get to keep his medal. I think the Duffys were distant relatives. Maybe Peter didn't come back from the war. How and why Vince had kept this medal is unknown but if a Duffy knows about Peter, it is time the medal passed to them.

In mid 1988 John Little asked me to assist in the development of a smart idea called *Arts Locum*. My friend Justin Macdonnell was already contributing to it along with Don Grace formerly of AETT, Dorothy Downs and James Milson. *Arts Locum* offered artistic organisations a service to access relief, a substitute or locum administrator or other skilled executive to fill-in for or back-fill a vacancy or absence, for holidays and the like. Clever idea. I helped set up the skills-based dBBase and systems and placed myself on the register. I ultimately did work for the Crafts Council of Australia, Ministry for the Arts, Museum of Modern Art and a number of others filling in when people were on holidays.

I took a shareholding in the business because I saw potential for growth if promoted well and understood. The *Arts Locum* register purportedly represented close to one hundred and fifty proven people with good experience and some five hundred potential user organisations. I helped promote the business in arts media refreshing my talent for public relations which was

insightful given a new role just around the corner. Unfortunately, apart from my gaining some work the sales pitch misrepresented both the assets and potential. I forced a reversal of purchase and left Little and business partner Christie to sort out what they wanted to do with the left-overs. It was all very messy among those with interests.

I have referred to a long involvement with the film industry 47 Club. Late in 1988 I was asked to assist a current board member, Bruce Leonard, in drafting a resolution and a supporting paper to admit women to membership. Women were admitted as associates based on our argument and propositions. Carol was delighted given her voluntary work on the Movie Balls.

With Kathleen Norris's departure from the AETT in late 1987, Denis Lenehan and John Woodland used SxS to validate a number of production budgets and schedules.

Wilton Morley's production company crashed in late '88. Some said over two million dollars lost. His business partner, the son of the Sydney Opera House GM Lloyd Martin, David Martin, put in a credible effort in trying to clean up the mess and, as I recall, got some unwarranted criticism for his honest efforts. Wilton opened a restaurant/ bar in Tampa Florida called *Mad Dogs and Englishmen*. At one stage there was a warrant out for him if he ever came back to Oz.

Returning to *Quasimodo* in this same timeline. Publicist Patti Mostyn took an interest in the project and kindly brought in London based producer Helen Montagu to advise on opportunities and options. Montagu liked the concept but at this relatively early stage of development, without a finished script, she sat and waited for a more complete proposition from us. I prepared this and sent it to London. Within a week Helen had replied positively with budget instructions and notes about her early thinking which was to offer the score to Andre Previn or Elton John and the lead to Sting. Sting subsequently signed for a 42-week Broadway contract which pushed any potential opening date for Q another year away.

Word of the Montagu connection filtered out and I received a call from Freddie Gibson GM of Sydney Theatre Royal requesting a copy of work so far. In April 1989 Freddie offered to float the project with his investor connections. Freddie suggested *Quasimodo* start its run in London. If Polanski declined then Freddie would suggest others to direct but pointedly said not Hal Prince. He was keen on Tom Stoppard as the replacement for Bob Ellis, and Tim Rice for lyrics along with Mike de Winter for design (given Warren Field's death). Head swimming stuff. But Freddie saw it as a 'pop-opera' using some of my production suggestions for the two-sides of Q's personality.

I wrote to Polanski and we scheduled to meet at his apartment while I was in Paris in early June. Roman was interested but had signed to do other work which bumped him from consideration. We cancelled the meeting. However, we did get together some years later over another opportunity.

With Warren's death and Bob Ellis being difficult by sulking and ruminating over whether a better production story line might well be found by considering *Mata Hari*, *Jean Harlow* or *Vincent van Gogh* as alternative productions, the London offers became more attractive. Also, Michael McDonald, a financier, produced 'seed funds' from an Indonesian source who also wanted first option for up to three million pounds of investment in a London start of a world tour. A commitment was contingent on creative talent and performing names.

Well, eventually the production didn't happen because too many people wanted a say and control. I took my fee and exited. A conceptual show poster illustration drawn by Warren Field is included in the photos of this book as a tribute.

I have just scratched the surface of the projects in which I was involved in advising, negotiating, directing and sharing in benefits around this time. It was financially a lucrative time. Incidentally, only one in, say, ten such projects ever gets up and usually not in the form originally conceived. I hope this has been an insight into some interesting events which touched my career.